



March 19, 2020

The Honorable Lawrence Hogan, Jr.
Governor of Maryland
State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Robert Green
Secretary of Md. Dept. of Public Safety & Cor. Services
6776 Reisterstown Rd., Ste 310
Baltimore, MD 21215

re: Coronavirus and bipartisan support for protection of inmates of Md. prisons and detention centers

Dear Governor Hogan and Secretary Green:

Thank you, Governor Hogan, for the strong-restrictions you have recently placed on group activities in Maryland to slow the spread of Covid-19. Your willingness to take such wise actions early in the crisis will help decrease the chance that our medical system is overwhelmed and will help save lives.

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) urges you similarly to prepare a plan for how to handle any situation that arises in Maryland prisons and jails in the coming days and, with this letter, offers nonpartisan support for such action. As you are aware, there have been extreme breakouts of Covid-19 in both the Chinese and Iranian prisons. Iran elected to handle this by releasing nonviolent short-term prisoners, thus allowing the prisons to have a better ratio of guards to prisoners and making more space for the separation of the ill and healthy. Other [prison systems around the U.S. also have begun making adjustments and contingency plans](#) both [particularly on the local level](#).

Releasing prisoners is not an action to be taken lightly, but if the Md. Division of Corrections worked with the Office of the Governor to prepare a list of criteria for release as to nonviolent and elderly inmates, then associated lists of those prisoners (whose release is unlikely to lead to increased violence in our communities). In this way, a decision to release a portion of the prison population could be made quickly and effectively, should a situation arise in which it looked like infection was likely to spread in the prisons and overwhelm the limited medical facilities there.

Thank you for considering this suggestion and for your ongoing efforts to protect Marylanders' health, both in the communities and in our correctional system.

Best,

Stuart O. Simms
DPSCS Secretary (1997-2003)